

Pennyworth of Wit.

HERE is a Pennyworth of wit,
For those that never went astray,
If a warning they take by me,
'Twill do them good another day.
'Tis the touch-stone of true love,
Betwixt a harlot and a wife,
The former doth destructive prove,
The latter yields the joys of life.
As in the Book you may behold,
Set forth by Mr. William Lane,
A wealthy merchant brave and bold,
Who did a harlot long maintain.
Although a virtuous wife he had,
Likewise a youthful daughter dear,
Which might have made a heart full glad,
Yet them he never would come near.
The traffic which he traded for
On the tempestuous ocean wide,
His harlot had it brought to her,
But nothing to his virtuous bride.
The finest silks that could be bought,
Nay, jewels, rubies, diamond rings,
He to his wanton harlot brought,
With many other costly things.
She still received them with a smile,
When he came from the raging seas,
And said with words as smooth as oil,
My dearest come and take thy ease.
To thy soft bed and linen fine,
Thou art right welcome, love, said she,
Both I and all that's here is mine,
Shall still at thy devotion be.
He brought two hundred pounds in gold,
And after that three hundred more,
Rich chains and jewels manifold,
And bid her lay them up in store.
Aye, that I will, thou need'st not fear,
And so embrac'd him with a kiss,
Then took the wealth, and said, my dear,
I'll have a special care of this.
Then did they banquet many days,
Feasting on delicious fare,
Thus by her false deluding ways,
She drew him in a fatal snare.
When he had liv'd some time on shore,
He must go to the seas again,
With traffic to encrease his store,
The wanton harlot to maintain.
To whom he said, my joy and dear,
What venture will you send

A good return thou need'st not fear,
I'll be thy factor and thy friend.
In goods, my dear, I'll send above
Ten pounds, thou shalt take on board,
I know that unto me, my dear,
A treble gain thou wilt afford.
This said, next to his wife he goes,
And ask'd her in a scornful wise,
What venture she would then propose,
To send him for merchandise.
I'll send a penny, love, by thee,
Be sure you take great care of it,
When you're in foreign parts, said she,
Pray buy a pennyworth of wit.
She laid the penny in his hand,
And said, I pray now don't forget,
When you are in another land,
To buy a pennyworth of wit.
He put the penny up secure,
And said, I'll take a special care,
To lay it out you may be sure;
So to his Miss he did repair.
And told her what he was to buy,
At which she laugh'd his wife to scorn:
On board he went immediately,
And so to sea that very morn.
NOW they are gone with merry hearts
The merchant and his jovial crew,
From port to port in foreign parts,
To trade as they were wont to do.
At length when he had well bestow'd,
The cargo which was outward bound,
He did his trading vessels load,
With the rich treasure which he found.
As he is merchandise still sent,
They turn'd to gems and golden ore,
Which crown'd his labour with content,
He never was so rich before.
The wanton harlot's venture then,
Did turn to great account likewise,
For ev'ry pound she should have ten,
Such was his lucky merchandise.
For joy of which the merchant cry'd,
One merry bout my lads shall have,
A splendid supper I'll provide,
Of all the dainties you can crave.
Before we set to sea again,
Which sail he to a tavern went,
Where they did drink and feast amain,
Till crowns and pounds were also spent.

The merchant then with laughter mov'd
Said he for Wit had never thought,
My harlot's venture is improv'd,
But of my wife's I never thought.
One single penny, and no more,
She as a venture sent by me,
I was to lay it out therefore,
In what you think a rarity.
She bid me use my utmost skill,
To buy a pennyworth of wit,
But I have kept the penny still,
And ne'er so much as thought of it.
Where shall I go to lay it out,
True wit is hard and scarce to find;
But come, my lads, let's us toss about,
My wife's small venture I'll not mind.
There is a proverb often used,
Wit's never good till bought full dear,
Therefore I well may be excus'd,
There's little for a penny here.
An aged father sitting by,
Whose venerable locks were gray,
Straight made the merchant this reply:
Hear me a word or two I pray,
Thy harlot in prosperity;
She will embrace thee for thy gold,
But when in want and poverty,
You'll nought from her but frowns behold.
And ready to betray thy life,
When wretched, naked, poor and low,
But thy true hearted faithful wife,
Will stand by thee in wealth and woe.
If thou wilt prove the truth of this,
Strip off thy gaudy gay array,
And so return to loving Miss,
Declare that thou was cast away;
Thy riches buried in the main,
Besides as you passed through the wood,
One of your servants you have slain,
For which your life in danger stood:
Beseech her for to shelter thee,
Declare on her you do depend,
And then, alas! full soon you'll see,
How far she'll prove a faithful friend!
Then if she frowns go to thy wife,
Tell her this melancholy theme,
Whose labours most to save thy life,
Let them be most in thy esteem.
Father, the merchant then reply'd,
You must this single penny take,
And when I've pass'd the ocean wide,
A proof of it I meant to make.
So loving friend, for ought I know,
I may this single penny prize,

may be the best I do bestow,
In my fine wealthy merchandise.
So taking leave, away they went,
Both he and his fine hearts of gold.
Unto them he said, I must prove the same
When I my native land behold.
WITH full sails away they went,
Neptune the golden cargo bore,
Thro' roaring waves to their content,
At length they reach the British shore.
The merchant put on poor array,
The very worst of ragged cloaths,
And then without the least delay,
He to his wanton harlot goes.
When she beheld him in distress,
She cry'd what is the matter now,
Said he I'm poor and penniless,
With that he made a courteous bow,
Crying no man was e'er so crost
As I have been, sweetheart's delight,
My ship and all my cargo lost,
Without thy help I'm ruin'd quite.
My loss is great, yet that's not all,
One of my servants I have slain,
As we did both at variance fall,
Some shelter let me here obtain.
I dare not go a near my wife,
Whom I have wronged many years,
Into thy hands I put my life,
Take pity of my melting tears.
You bloody villain, she reply'd,
Don't in the least on me depend,
Begone, or as I live, she cry'd,
I for an officer will send.
I'll give you neither bread nor drink,
Nor any shelter shall you have,
Of nasty lousy rags you stink,
Begone you base pernicious slave.
Don't think that I'll your counsel keep,
Or harbour any such as you,
He turn'd aside and seem'd to weep,
And bid the wanton jilt adieu.
Then to his loving wife he came,
Both poor and naked in distress,
He told her all the very same,
Yet she receiv'd him ne'er the less.
My dear, she cry'd, since it is so,
Take comfort in thy loving wife,
All that I have shall freely go,
To gain a pardon for thy life.
I'll lodge thee in a place secure,
Where I will daily nourish thee,
Believe me, love, thou shalt be sure
To find a constant friend in me.

When he this perfect proof had seen
Which of them two did love him best,
Unto his virtuous wife he said,
My jewel set thy heart at rest.
Behold no servant have I slain;
Nor have I suffer'd any loss;
Enough I have us to maintain,
The ocean seas no more I'll cross.
My leading ship lies near the shore,
With gold and jewels richly fraught,
So much I never had before,
Thy pennyworth of wit I've bought.
Once more he to his harlot goes,
With fourteen sailors brave and bold,
All cloth'd in new and costly cloaths,
Of silk and rich embroidered gold.
The Miss when she his pomp beheld,
Did offer him a kind embrace,
But he with wrath and anger fill'd,
Did straight upbraid her to her face.
But she with smiles these words express'd:
I have a faithful love for thee,
What e'er I said was but a jest,
Why did'st thou go so soon from me?
'Twas time to go, for as I'm told,
You have another love in store,
Whom you have furnish'd with my gold,
And jewels which I brought on shore.
It's false, she said, I have them all:
With that the merchant soon reply'd,
Lay them down before me, then I shall
Be soon convinced and satisfied.
Then up she ran and fetch'd them down,
His jewels, gold, and rubies bright,
He seiz'd them all, then with a frown,
And bid the wanton jilt good night.
When he had took the golden purse,
And swept up ev'ry precious stone,
She cry'd, what will you rob me thus?
Yes that I will of what's my own.
You wanted to betray my life,
But thank'd be God there's no such fear,
These jewels shall adorn my wife,
Henceforth your house I'll ne'er come near.
Home he returned to his sweet wife,
And told her all that he had done;
E'er since they lead a happy life,
And he'll no more to harlots turn.
Thus he did the wanton harlot fit,
That long had his destruction sought:
This is a pennyworth of wit,
The best that ever a merchant bought.